

**CITY OF LODI
INFORMAL INFORMATIONAL MEETING
"SHIRTSLEEVE" SESSION
CARNEGIE FORUM, 305 WEST PINE STREET
TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 2004**

An Informal Informational Meeting ("Shirtsleeve" Session) of the Lodi City Council was held Tuesday, April 27, 2004, commencing at 7:00 a.m.

A. ROLL CALL

Present: Council Members – Beckman, Hitchcock, Howard, and Mayor Hansen

Absent: Council Members – Land

Also Present: City Manager Flynn, Interim City Attorney Schwabauer, and City Clerk Blackston

B. CITY COUNCIL CALENDAR UPDATE

City Clerk Blackston reviewed the weekly calendar (filed).

C. TOPIC(S)

C-1 "Transit Overview"

With the aid of overheads (filed), Tiffani Fink, Transportation Manager, reported that Grapeline and Dial-A-Ride now exceeds 520,000 rides a year. Costs have increased even though ridership numbers have flattened. This is due in part to costs added in 2002-03 for security and electricity in the parking structure, insurance increases, multi-model operations, and the cost of operating the capital that has been added. Insurance is under Dial-A-Ride and fixed route. Transit administration includes the Transportation Manager's salary and benefits, salary for an intern, operations and security for the parking structure, and advertising. There were three bills submitted after the close of 2002-03, which may have skewed the annual cost figures. There are a total of 25 vehicles in the fleet, including five 40-foot buses and a trolley.

Mayor Hansen suggested that the expenses be separated so that a true cost of service for Dial-A-Ride and the fixed-route system can be ascertained.

Public Works Director Prima noted that the Dial-A-Ride operations contract has increased in cost, which can partly be attributed to the pay and medical benefits increase that was given to the employees of Laidlaw (the former contractor) at the City's encouragement. In 1997-98 there were 65,000 riders on Dial-A-Ride, which as since increased to 90,000. He explained that when the Federal Transit Administration has a multi-year transportation bill, it allows cities to spend money from what they will receive in future years. Public Works took advantage of this when it built the parking structure and purchased some buses.

Ms. Fink recalled that Lodi switched providers from Laidlaw to MV Transportation in fiscal year 2002-03, and noted that the transition went very well. The MV Transportation contract includes insurance contributions, contractor responsibility for deductibles on accidents, and increased corporate support. MV Transportation pays 50% of the transit premium for insurance and any deductible on an accident.

Ms. Fink reported that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of riders who rely on wheelchairs, which increases the loading times significantly. The average wait time for demand response is 25 minutes. The City's contract states that demand response, including reservations, will be picked up within 45 minutes. The on-time performance is 97%. There are 1,600 riders per year that wait between 45 to 60 minutes, 796 riders wait 60 to 90 minutes, and 27 riders have wait times beyond 90 minutes. Dial-A-Ride is used 80% by seniors and the disabled. Reservation service for Dial-A-Ride ranges from 20% to 30%.

Mayor Hansen noted that adjustments to the express routes have had to be made to accommodate youth getting to and from school, in addition to children using Dial-A-Ride for school transportation. He felt this was a subsidy to the School District and asked Ms. Fink to track it.

In reply to Mayor Pro Tempore Beckman, Ms. Fink reported that Lodi transit is known throughout the state for having the lowest fares. Lodi is far below the 20% fare box recovery goal. The fixed-route fare is 50 cents, the senior/disabled route fare is 25 cents, and transfers are free. The Dial-A-Ride senior/disabled fare is \$1 and the general public fare is \$2 each way. Lower fares put more demand on the Transportation Development Act and Federal Transit Administration for operations, which limits capital for buying new vehicles. For each vehicle on the road, for every revenue hour, there is an average of 18 passengers on fixed route and nearly 3 on Dial-A-Ride.

Mr. Prima reported that in 2002-03 the cost for Dial-A-Ride and fixed route (excluding administration) was just over \$1 million each.

In answer to Council Member Howard, Liz Diaz, MV Transportation Project Manager, stated that the youngest child using the Dial-A-Ride service just turned six years of age. The largest percentage of school age children using the service go to junior high school. Children using Dial-A-Ride for school transportation equate to 2% of the total ridership.

Mr. Prima stated that express routes in the morning and afternoon, which mainly serve school children, are funded by Measure K. He reported that very few agencies, if any, use general fund money to subsidize transit.

Mayor Pro Tempore Beckman asked for Lodi private taxicab rates, to which Ms. Fink stated she would report back to Council.

In reply to Council Member Howard, Ms. Diaz reported that road calls (breakdowns) are under five per month. Dial-A-Ride is busiest between the hours of 1:30 to 4:00 p.m. and fixed route has the most passengers during 7:00 to 8:00 a.m. and 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. Mr. Prima noted that the City's vehicle maintenance shop currently has two vacancies and he has been receiving complaints from staff that maintenance intervals are getting longer.

Ms. Fink explained that for every hour that fixed-route service is operated, complementary para-transit (Dial-A-Ride) must be offered. On Dial-A-Ride the maximum that can be charged for a senior/disabled fare is twice the general public fixed-route fare. One way to limit general public ridership on Dial-A-Ride without restricting who rides is to significantly change the general public fare making fixed route more viable. In addition, route headways (time between buses) could be increased from 45 to 60 minute intervals, and routes at night and on weekends could be reduced. Dial-A-Ride service could be restricted to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) service only during peak hours. This would require a formal certification process and review of the operation. There is an appeal process if service is denied. Ms. Fink warned that it can be costly to introduce and maintain ADA service, there are complex requirements, and it may limit service to many people. Revenue adjustments could include fare increases, advertising on vehicles, benches, and shelters, and additional passes and subscription rates. Charging new development an additional one-time impact fee to help pay for capital expansion of the transit system would also be an option.

Council Member Hitchcock expressed concern that the general fund has been subsidizing transit for the past five years. The actual cost of a senior/disabled ride is \$13, with a 25 cent fare recapturing only 2%. The actual fixed-route cost is \$2.40 a ride, with a 50 cent fare recapturing 21%.

Mayor Pro Tempore Beckman was comfortable with subsidizing the fixed routes; however, he preferred to scale back Dial-A-Ride service as it competes with private enterprise. He indicated support for changing to an ADA service.

Mr. Prima stated that staff's recommendation would be to use the pricing mechanism to scale back on the general public category using Dial-A-Ride. Options will be brought to Council at a future meeting, as well as the cost difference between large and small buses, mileage, and maintenance.

Council Member Howard was opposed to an ADA service because of the burdensome restrictions.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- Myrna Wetzel was opposed to advertising on the buses, noting that she would be disappointed if the grape logo was no longer present or noticeably visible.

D. COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None.

E. ADJOURNMENT

No action was taken by the City Council. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 a.m.

ATTEST:

Susan J. Blackston
City Clerk